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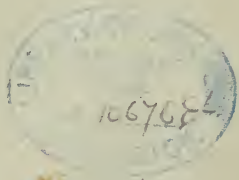


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AN EXAMINATION
OF THE
A PRIORI PRINCIPLES
ASSUMED BY
DR. CHARLES HODGE
IN HIS TREATISE ON
SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY.

BY WILLIAM MACON COLEMAN.

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE A PRIORI PRINCIPLES
ASSUMED BY DR. CHARLES HODGE IN HIS
TREATISE ON SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY.

Dr. Charles Hodge, Professor of Theology at the Seminary at Princeton, New Jersey, has recently published a work entitled, "Systematic Theology," which we may justly regard as the most authoratative exposition extant of what is commonly known as Orthodox Protestantism. Dr. Hodge is well qualified for such a work. With large natural gifts, he has given a long life to study. His learning is comprehensive in his domain. He is familiar with the history of opinion and with the modern theories of science and philosophy. For nearly half a century he has been before the religious world in synods and assemblies and has been busy with his pen in all the departments of his profession. His long continued position as Professor is of itself an evidence of the esteem and respect in which he is held by his fellow Presbyterians, and perhaps it would not be going too far to say that the whole Protestant world agrees in pointing him out as its best living representative. His work is the fruit of his ripest study and experience as commentator, professor, essayist and controversialist.

The publication of this work is a cause of gratification to all who are interested in matters of philosophy and religious faith. It is especially so to Catholics. It puts into definite shape and form the doctrines of Protestantism as they are held and taught to-day. And it supports them with all the cogency by which they possibly can be supported. All that the ability of the last three centuries could do in this behalf, all that modern research could do, all that the mind of the accomplished author himself could suggest—all have been combined in their defence. Protestantism can say nothing better. It is as able and as authoritative an exposition as Protestantism is capable of making. It is as such a representative exposition that it will be considered in this brief essay.

It is the purpose of the present writer to confine himself strictly to a few critical points upon which the whole theory of the "Systematic Theology" hinges. These points may be here vaguely indicated as contained in the general proposition that *Dr. Hodge assumes certain a priori principles of the reason which*

are necessary to the support of Protestantism, but which destroy the credibility of the Sacred Scriptures.

A resume of the introduction to his Theology gives all the essential features of Dr. Hodge's system. He teaches as follows:

Theology is a science. It is a science in the technical sense of the term—precisely as Botany and Chemistry are sciences. As nature furnishes all the facts for these sciences, so the Bible furnishes all the facts for Theology. As the botanist or chemist investigates the facts of nature, arranges and classifies them, and generalizes laws, so does the theologian proceed with the facts declared in the Bible. "It"—Theology—"must embrace an exhibition of the internal relation of these facts, one to another, and each to all. It must be able to show that if one be admitted others can not be denied." System in Theology arises from the constitution of the human mind itself. The method of Theology is the Inductive. This assumes:

1. The trustworthiness of the sense perceptions;
2. The trustworthiness of the mental operations;
3. The certainty of those truths which are not learned from experience, but which are given in the constitution of our nature.

Among these laws of belief which God has impressed upon the human mind are included some which have no direct application to the natural sciences. Such, for example, as the essential distinction between right and wrong, that nothing contrary to virtue can be enjoined by God, and other similar first truths which God has implanted in the constitution of all moral beings, and which no objective revelation can possibly contradict. Thus equipped and restricted the theologian takes up his Bible and begins the work of arranging all the facts therein contained into a harmonious and complete system. The scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain all the facts and are the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Reason has its proper office in matters of religion. It is necessarily pre-supposed in every revelation. Revelation is the communication of truth to the mind. This communication supposes the capacity to receive it. Truths to be received as objects of faith must be first intellectually apprehended. The first and indispensable office of reason in matters of faith, is, therefore, the cognition of the truths proposed for our reception. There is an important distinction between knowing and comprehending. We cannot comprehend God, *i. e.* know him to perfection, but we may know him partially, yet really and as He is in himself. But reason has higher prerogatives. It is the judge of the credibility of revelation. That which is absurd, contradictory, or in violation of the laws of belief impressed upon us, must be rejected as unworthy of credit. The Bible is a plain book. It is intelligible by the people. The people are bound to read it and interpret it for themselves. In all things necessary

to salvation it is sufficiently plain to be understood by the unlearned. There is no higher authority than the private judgment of the individual in determining any point of faith or practice.

From the foregoing synopsis it is evident that Dr. Hodge maintains that *there are certain primary truths or original data of consciousness impressed upon our constitution which revelation pre-supposes, and which must be our criteria in investigating its claims for reception, and must guide us in its interpretation when accepted.* But this must be made out from the verbatim statements of our author himself. It must be shown from his own unequivocal language that he maintains the proposition above stated.

In paragraph 5, page 5, vol. 1, he says of the inductive method, which method he adopts: "It is so called because it agrees in everything essential with the inductive method as applied to the natural sciences."

"The man of science comes to the study of nature with certain assumptions. 1. He assumes the trustworthiness of his sense perceptions. Unless he can rely upon the well-authenticated testimony of his senses, he is deprived of all means of prosecuting his investigations. The facts of nature reveal themselves to our faculties of sense, and can be known in no other way. 2. He must also assume the trustworthiness of his mental operations. He must take for granted that he can perceive, compare, combine, remember, and infer; and that he can safely rely upon these mental faculties in their legitimate exercise. 3. He must also rely on the certainty of those truths which are not learned from experience, but which are given in the constitution of his own nature. That every effect (event?) must have a cause; that the same cause, under like circumstances, will produce a like effect; that a cause is not a mere uniform antecedent, but that which contains within itself the reason why the effect occurs."

In the next paragraph, speaking of "the Inductive Method applied to Theology" he remarks:

"The Bible is to the theologian what nature is to the man of science. It is his store-house of facts; and his method of ascertaining what the Bible teaches, is the same as that which the natural philosopher adopts to ascertain what nature teaches. In the first place he comes to his task with all the assumptions above mentioned. He must assume the validity of those laws of belief which God has impressed on our nature." But he "comes to his task" with yet higher assumptions than these: "In these laws are included some which have no direct application to the natural sciences. Such, for example, as the essential distinction between right and wrong; that nothing contrary to virtue can be enjoined by God; that it cannot be right to do evil that good may come; that sin deserves punishment and other similar first truths which

God has implanted in the constitution of all moral beings and which no objective revelation can possibly contradict."

This quotation is a formal statement by our author at the outset of his work and at its appropriate place of the infallible knowledge in the possession of man which revelation presupposes. This knowledge consists not in mere logical forms of thought alone, but in material data, in synthetic judgments *a priori*, some of which he gives and others of which, not given, he admits. But not only is this infallible knowledge the test to which revelation must be subjected before it can be received, but it must also be the guide in its interpretation, for in his own language this knowledge is that "*which no objective revelation can possibly contradict.*"

This should be sufficient to show that Dr. Hodge maintains the proposition above stated. But to avoid the possible charges of misunderstanding our author, or misrepresenting him, or giving his principles a wider range than he intended, let us quote further, and let his own explicit declarations bear their own testimony.

On page 49, vol. 1, under the title "Proper Office of Reason in Matters of Religion," we read: "The first and indispensable office of reason, therefore, in matters of faith, is the cognition or intelligent apprehension of the truths proposed for our reception." In the same connection, and on page 50, we read: "In the second place, it is the prerogative of reason to judge of the credibility of a revelation;" also, on page 51, "If it"—that is anything—"is seen to be impossible, no authority, and no amount or kind of evidence can impose the obligation to receive it as true." Immediately thereupon he proceeds to classify the impossible as follows: "1. That is impossible which involves a contradiction. 2. It is impossible that God should do, approve, or command what is morally wrong. 3. It is impossible that he should require us to believe what contradicts any of the laws of belief which he has impressed on our nature." Hereupon follows "Proof of this Prerogative of Reason," and the conclusion is given on page 52, in language which is sufficiently strong and explicit to fully justify the statement that Dr. Hodge holds the doctrine attributed to him as above given. "We are," he says, "consequently, not only authorized but required to pronounce anathema on an apostle or angel from heaven, who should call upon us to receive as a revelation from God anything absurd, or wicked, or inconsistent with the intellectual or moral nature with which he has endowed us." It would be tedious and useless to multiply extracts. In fact this principle constitutes the whole groundwork of his system, and to give all the instances where it is formally recognized or indirectly presumed would be to reproduce the entire work. One more quotation will suffice. On page 59, paragraph 7 treats of "The Office of the Senses in Matters of Faith," and in the fol-

lowing language: "The question, 'What authority is due to the senses in matters of faith,' arose out of the controversy between Romanists and Protestants. The doctrine of transubstantiation as taught by the Romish church contradicts our senses of sight, taste, and touch. It was natural for Protestants to appeal to this contradiction as decisive evidence against the doctrine. Romanists reply by denying the competency of the senses to bear testimony in such cases."

Protestants maintain the validity of that testimony on the following grounds: (1.) "Confidence in the well authenticated testimony of our senses is one of those laws of belief which God has impressed upon our nature; from the authority of those laws it is impossible that we should emancipate ourselves." (2.) "Confidence in our senses is, therefore, one form of our confidence in God." (3.) "All ground of certainty in matters either of faith or knowledge is destroyed if confidence in the laws of our nature be abandoned." (4.) "All external, supernatural revelation is addressed to the senses."

It seems, therefore, to be established from his own explicit and unmistakable declarations that Dr. Hodge holds and defends the doctrine *that the human mind, in virtue of its own constitution and independent of revelation or any supernatural influence, is in possession of certain original truths and laws of belief which constitute a tribunal of the last resort, and are of paramount authority in matters of faith.*

The first inquiry which naturally suggest itself is, what are these original truths and laws of belief? It is to be regreted that our author has not formally set forth truths and laws of such transcendent moment in exhaustive categories. But he has nowhere done so. He has explicitly given some here and some there, and some he has not explicitly given but has presumed. However, he has given them, at least some of them, and given them with sufficient clearness and distinctness. It will not be denied that he includes among these the following:

1. The validity of the testimony of the senses.
2. The existence of finite substances, and the correlation between these and their attributes.
3. The correlation between cause and effect.
4. The infinity of time and space.
5. That freedom is the condition of moral action.
6. That there is an essential distinction between right and wrong.
7. That God can do no wrong.

It may be observed in passing, that the merely formal or logical laws of thought have been excluded from the above category as immaterial to the argument, and only those taken which have a positive content, or, in other words, are synthetical judgments.

In reflecting upon these principles in the light in which they

are viewed by our author, we are overwhelmed by their awful grandeur. They are not merely relatively true for us. They are not merely truths which are adapted indeed to our intellectual and moral nature as at present constituted, but which we may shake off and soar far above and beyond in a future and higher state of existence. They constitute truth for all intelligences which ever have existed and which it is possible for God to create. They are absolute truths. What does that mean? It means that they are laws and conditions imposed upon the nature of God himself, and that His thought and His action are restricted within their limitations. God must think and act under the law of cause and effect; God must think in time and act in space; and this thought and action must conform to the laws of duration and extension. As man thinks and acts under the laws of cause and effect, and space and time, in the same mode and kind does God think and act. The same things which are immutable and eternal truths for God are such for man. Both God and man are in possession of identical cognitions and apprehend them with like consciousness. They constitute within their sphere the limits and the laws of the human and Divine intelligence and action. As the child is to the sage, so man stands related to God. As the child partakes of the nature of the man, so man partakes of the nature of God in cognizing these immutable and eternal truths. Before ever a world was launched into space, before a created intelligence was brought forth, in that past when the Triune God was alone in time and space, these self-same truths which the human minds possesses existed in the Divine mind, immutable as He is immutable, co-etaneous and co-existent with His own eternity.

• These truths, according to our author, God has revealed to us. Not by any external objective revelation, but in the very constitution of our nature. He has so framed us that we see them by their own light, and seeing them, at once recognize them and bow to their paramount authority. God has likewise given us an external revelation, but the internal revelation made in the constitution of our nature is more worthy, in that it is the judge which passes upon the merits of the other and is the supreme judge of its interpretation.

Such, then, is the dignity and nature of these truths as regarded by our author.

Now, to think at all, there must be some object of thought. This object of thought must conform to the laws of thought. *i. e.* with the laws of identity, contradiction, and excluded middle. We cannot think a round square or an unjust justice. What cannot be thought in this sense is impossible. Not merely impossible for us or impossible to human thought, but absolutely impossible—impossible to God himself—for he has revealed these truths to us in our nature, and they are also His truths.

With these premises, which our author will admit—for they are his own—we proceed to consider separately the seven principles above stated, and to consider them by and through the light of principles admittedly of equal authority.

1. *The validity of the testimony of the senses.*

Now, whatever questions may arise about the appropriate sphere of the senses, our author will not deny that the senses give in testimony—

(a) The existence of an external world.

(b) That world existing as it appears.

Now, this deliverance of sense may be called in question in both particulars. It cannot in either instance stand the test of the two criteria of necessity and universality recognized by our author.

(a) The existence of an external world.

As a matter of fact, consciousness teaches that it is not impossible or absurd, nay, not even unreasonable to suppose that I am conscious of only a subjective mode of the ego. So much for the necessity of the belief. As to its universality, the fact is that systems of philosophy have had their day which were founded upon a denial of this belief.

(b) That world existing as it appears.

What has just been remarked may be repeated here, with the additional fact that the great body of philosophers, until within quite recent times, have held that our knowledge of the external world was not immediate, presentative knowledge, but mediate and representative knowledge; that a *tertium quid* intervened, and that this, and not the external world, was the immediate object of consciousness.

Now, even if our author had set out a principle which could stand the test of necessity and universality, he would yet be wide as the poles from establishing it upon the immutable basis which he claims. But, as just shown, not even this is accomplished. The principle is, then, to be abandoned.

It would be competent to argue that if our author has failed in making out his claim for a single one of these principles, he has failed in all. For if these principles are simple, original, seen of their own light and necessarily enforcing belief, what assurance is there that if we are mistaken in one we are not mistaken in all?

2. *The existence of finite substances, and the correlation between them and their attributes.*

Absolute existence is impossible to thought, and in this, impossible to us. What we cannot think cannot exist for us. It is a void and unknown *x*, of which nothing can be predicated. To say that nothing can be predicated of it is to say that it is unknown, unknowable, incogitable, inconceivable, impossible. Not known in some feeble degree, partially and obscurely known, but utterly and absolutely unknown, and out of all relation to our facul-

ties. For us, then, absolute existence is incogitable and impossible. For absolute existence is existence without conditions, and to think is to condition. Thus to think absolute existence is to think existence neither in time or in space, nor in relation to our faculties of cognition. Is it possible for us to conceive or intuit existence and not at the same time to conceive or intuit it as existing in time and space? Is it possible for us to conceive or intuit existence and at the same time not to conceive or intuit it in relation to our consciousness? Existence, then, can only be apprehended under the relations and conditions of time and space, material existence both in space and time and immaterial existence at least in time.

Next, what is substance? Or rather what is substance as regarded by our author? It is that which remains after we abstract all the sensible properties of an object. It cannot, then, be an object of the senses. It is, therefore, an object of consciousness. This object of consciousness we are impelled by a law of our nature to believe existing externally in time and space. Now, an object of consciousness must conform to the laws of thought. It must neither be *felo de se*, or be a mere negation of positive knowledge, or zero. If either of these conditions remain unfulfilled, then the conception or intuition—not once to speak of the external reality—of substance is impossible. What, then, is the positive content of thought when the word “substance” is employed? We have seen that it is not an object of the senses, hence no image can be construed to the imagination. Let us now make the effort to think it. It is that which exists by itself. (*quod subsistat per se.*) It is that which can be thought only through and by means of its properties. In other words, we think substance as an existence independent of qualities, which existence can only be thought by and through its qualities. That is, we think it necessarily existing by itself in necessary connection and relation with something else. This conception is suicidal. It is contrary to a law of our nature. It contains within itself its own destruction. It is self-contradictory. Beyond this consciousness we cannot go.

In what has just been remarked the conception has been considered as involving a knowledge of substance by and through its properties. This has been seen to be self-contradictory. If, on the other hand, we attempt to conceive or intuit substance in and through itself, the effort is vain, we have mere negation, a vacuity, a nothing.

The validity of this principle must, therefore, be given up, as the principle itself is shown to be either a self contradiction or a mere negation of thought.

3. *The correlation between cause and effect.*

By this proposition is not simply meant that an effect is that

which has a cause. This would merely be an identical proposition equivalent to saying that "effect" was "effect." It means in the sense of our author, that there is a positive dictum of consciousness, or in other words, revelation of God's eternal truth to man in his intellectual nature that spontaneity of existence is impossible; that out of nothing, nothing can originate its own existence.

We tread here a well-worn path. To undertake to set forth the difficulties which accompany the doctrine of causality would be to write the history of speculative philosophy. We shall content ourselves with a single quotation from a distinguished thinker, not adduced as authority, but intended to convey what we mean to say in the most simple, intelligible and forcible language possible:

"If there be postulated an express and positive affirmation of intelligence to account for the fact that existence cannot absolutely commence, we must equally postulate a counter affirmation of intelligence, positive and express, to explain the counter fact that existence cannot infinitely not commence. The one necessity of the mind is equally strong as the other; and if the one be a positive dictum, an express testimony of intelligence, so also must be the other. But they are contradictories; and, as contradictories, they cannot both be true."

This principle must also be discarded, unless we consent to adopt the alternative that God has revealed a lie.

4. *The infinity of time and space.*

It is to be remarked at the outset that there can be no such thing as a "vague," a "feeble," a "limited" knowledge of the infinite in time and space. We either have the cognition of the infinite, or we do not have it. A middle ground is not possible. If this proposition be true, then God himself is limited and conditioned by time and space.

It is not difficult to show the contradictions and absurdities which flow from the assumption of a conception of this infinite. We can prove with equal force of reason that the Universe had a beginning in time and that it had no beginning in time; that it is bounded in space and that it is not bounded in space. We can prove that a whole is equal to less than the sum of its parts; and that the sum of two wholes taken together is equal to one of the wholes by itself. To illustrate. Infinite time is time which has no end. One infinite time has past and one lies in the future. The infinite time which is past is no greater now than it was a million years ago, and yet, this million years is a part of the infinity of past time. Thus the whole is equal to less than the sum of its parts. Again. The infinity which is past is equal to the infinity which is yet to come. These are two separate wholes. But these two infinities added together make no more than one of

the wholes; the sum of two wholes is equal to one whole alone. It would be easy to multiply contradictions and absurdities. One illustration from space will be sufficient. Let it be required to prove that a cubic inch of matter may be made to occupy infinite space. Space is composed of an infinite number of smaller spaces. Matter is infinitely divisible. A cubic inch of matter may be divided into an infinite number of parts. With an infinite number of parts you can fill infinite space. Hence a cubic inch may fill the Universe.

Such are the contradictions and absurdities which flow from the assumption of a cognition of the infinite in time and space. If there be any revelation of God to man in his own intellectual nature, the axioms of geometry must be among them, and an assumption which sets these aside is not to be entertained for a moment.

5. *Freedom is a condition of moral action.*

It is to be observed that the four principles which have just been considered are derived from our intellectual nature, and that the three which are to follow are derived from our moral nature. In point of dignity and authority they are all held equal by our author, who regards them all alike as revelations of immutable and eternal truths made by God to man in the constitution of his nature.

The three propositions, Freedom is essential to moral action; There is an essential distinction between right and wrong; and God can do no wrong; possess a quality of their own. There is one aspect in which they are true and another aspect in which they are false. If we derive our notions about freedom and right and wrong by what God's infallible church teaches, then these propositions are true. But if we determine upon the the authority of our own reason what is freedom and what is right and wrong, and claim that it is reason's prerogative to so determine independent of revelation, and accordingly subject the claims of revelation to the ultimate tribunal erected by reason, then these propositions are false and destructive of all religion. It is in this latter sense that our author holds them, for he explicitly states that revelation presupposes these truths, and that they are revelations of God to us in our nature, hence infallible.

To recur, then, to the consideration of the proposition, "Freedom is a condition of moral action."

Now, freedom is the quality of an act of the will. The notion of freedom is given in consciousness. But an act of the will is an effect from a preceding cause, and that cause in turn an effect of a preceding cause, and so on *ad infinitum*. Hence the will does not determine itself, but is determined by causes. But this is to deny freedom to the will, and this is to deny a moral universe and a moral governor of the universe.

Here we see an infallible revelation made to us in our moral nature—freedom—destroyed by an infallible revelation made to us in our intellectual nature—causality—on the authority of a third infallible revelation which forbids us to violate a law of thought—non-contradiction!

6. *There is an essential distinction between right and wrong.*

The constitution of our nature tells us that this particular action is right and that particular action is wrong. Not relatively right and wrong, *i. e.* right and wrong only for us, but absolutely and immutably right and wrong; right and wrong for God himself. But the testimony of our senses in the matter of God's dealing with the world gives that in evidence, which, on the assumption of these original truths, the constitution of our moral nature impels us to pronounce unjust.

7. *God can do no wrong.*

This proposition—of course in the sense in which our author holds it—that is, that it is the prerogative of reason to declare what is right and what is wrong independent of revelation—this proposition is liable to the same criticism as the proposition immediately preceding. In both we see one law of our nature contradicted by another law of our nature. In both we see human reason staggering in darkness and despair, treading round and round in the same circle unable to escape from the labyrinth of its own contradictions.

We have thus seen that Dr. Hodge maintains that the human mind is in possession of certain native, original, *a priori* truths, not derived from experience or from an objective revelation, but which are immediate revelations of God to our moral and intellectual nature. We have seen the supreme dignity which must attach to these truths if they be allowed; that they are absolute, eternal and immutable; that they are laws springing out of the nature of God himself; that they limit and condition His existence and cognition; and, as such, are of transcendent and paramount authority for us. It necessarily follows, as our author explicitly declares, "that no objective revelation can possibly contradict them." We have seen what some of these alleged original truths are, and also what are some of the inevitable contradictions and absurdities which result from accepting them as such.

But Dr. Hodge declares that, unless these truths be accepted, "the root of our nature is a lie;" knowledge impossible and faith a delusion! But these alleged truths have been shown to be absurd and contradictory. The result is inexorable. Holding these truths he must give up his religion, or cleaving to his religion he must abandon these truths.

The argument to show that both knowledge and faith are impossible, if we accept the validity of these so-called first principles as understood by our author, might safely be rested here. Logic

requires nothing more. But for the sake of further clearness and distinctness, and to render this discussion as perspicuous and as forcible as it is possible for us to make it, we proceed to its illustration.

1. *It is a fact of human consciousness that these alleged intuitions of the reason or these assumed infallible revelations from God himself, as they may be called, imperatively demand that God should be conceived as Absolute and Infinite Being. It is equally true that these same intuitions constrain us with an equal cogency to conceive God as a person. But the conception of God as Absolute and Infinite Being is inconsistent with the conception of God as a person. Ergo, these intuitions or revelations are contradictory and unworthy of belief.*

The following considerations may be useful in elucidating and illustrating the foregoing thesis.

The existence of a God is the necessary foundation of all theology and religion. It is likewise the beginning and the end of all human thought and speculation. We awake to consciousness to find ourselves distinct from something else. That which thinks and wills, and remembers and reasons, or, in other words, the thinking subject, the *ego*, the *me*, is not the object which is intuited or thought. The two are essentially separate and distinct. As the thinking subject is related to the external world, so are the multiplied objects of the external world related to each other. They are definitely related—related under limitations—as the thinking subject is also related to them. Thus, distinction, relation, and limitation is the condition of consciousness. But at the same time, this existence is conceived as dependent; that is, not as having its existence in itself, but as existing in and through something else as its ground or cause of existence. This ground of existence is the Absolute. But the Absolute must be one—not two, or many. Hence, existence extended in space, or matter, and existence protensive in time, or spirit, must both have the same common ground or substratum of existence. This common ground or substratum of existence is absolute substance, and this manifests itself under the two attributes of consciousness and extension. The same result is reached if either the object or the subject of consciousness be denied reality, or, if both subject and object be destroyed in thought. In the first instance, the result is ideal Pantheism; in the second, it is material Pantheism, and in the third, it is the Pantheism of the development of thought. All these systems are essentially the same. It is the ONE which is permanent, and which is the ground of all things else.

The history of human thought has verified this utterance of consciousness. Dr. Hodge grapples in vain with the Absolute. In vain he repudiates its definition. In vain he strives to set up

a personal ruler of the Universe in its stead. His own intuitions of the reason, those infallible revelations of God to man, given in human consciousness, overwhelm him. They *demand* the Absolute, and will not rest satisfied with anything less. This Absolute must not only be the ground of all being but it must embrace all being. It must fill all time and occupy all space. It is Infinite. It is the All.

This conception of the Absolute is clearly inconsistent with the conception of personality. If God be the All, he is only personal as he comes to personality in man, for personality is only a portion of the All.

These intuitions which demand the existence of an impersonal Absolute are in direct contradiction with intuitions of equal authority which demand the existence of a personal Ruler of the Universe. The former are derived from our intellectual nature, the latter from our moral nature. These intuitions from our moral nature give us the sense of right and wrong, the sense of freedom and of moral responsibility. In giving these as immutable and eternal, there is given at the same time a moral universe and with it a moral Governor of the Universe, or a personality. Which of these two classes of our infallible intuitions shall we receive? Shall we conclude with reason that God is the Absolute; or shall we decide with conscience that God is a person?

2. *But even if the conception of the Absolute be repudiated, the conception of the Divine Being, as given by Dr. Hodge, is equally self-contradictory and absurd.*

In vol. 1, page 338, we read: "While, therefore, it is admitted not only that the Infinite God is incomprehensible and that our knowledge of Him is both partial and imperfect; that there is much in God which we do not know at all, and that what we do know we know very imperfectly, nevertheless our knowledge, as far as it goes, is true knowledge. God really is what we believe Him to be, so far as our idea of Him is determined by the revelation which He has made of Himself in His works in the constitution of our nature, in His word, and in the person of His Son. To know is simply to have such apprehensions of an object as conform to what that object really is. We know what the word "spirit" means. We know what the words "infinite," "eternal," and "immutable" mean. And, therefore, the sublime proposition, pregnant with more truth than was ever compressed in any other sentence, "God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and immutable," conveys to the mind as distinct an idea, and as true (*i. e.* trustworthy) knowledge, as the proposition, "The human soul is a spirit." In this sense God is an object of knowledge. He is not the unknown God, because He is infinite. Knowledge in Him does not cease to be knowledge because it is omniscience; power

does not cease to be power because it is omnipotence, any more than space ceases to be space because it is infinite."

Startling paradox! Confusion worse confounded! "God is a spirit, infinite." Spirit is substance and infinite substance is all substance. Yet finite substance exists which is not a part of infinite substance. As much as to say that finite space is not a part of infinite space! "God is eternal." But every moment of His existence His eternity is being augmented. It is greater now than it was at the creation. It will be greater at the consummation of all things than it is now! "He is immutable." But He passes from repose into creation! Such a Being we are called upon to construe to our minds; thus is thought called upon to commit the suicidal act of thinking in violation of its own laws. It will not avail for Dr. Hodge to urge that "God is infinitely exalted above our loftiest conceptions," that "the finite cannot comprehend the infinite," that "these are mysteries before which human reason should bow in silence and reverence." If language have any meaning at all, he means to assert distinctly that our knowledge of God is true knowledge as far as it extends, and that so far, this knowledge gives us God as he really exist. But, if true knowledge, we may reason upon it, and evolve infallible conclusions if we reason in conformity with the infallible laws of belief and the infallible dicta of consciousness "revealed" to us in the constitution of our nature. Not only may we so reason, but this reasoning is necessarily imposed upon us by these same laws. The conception of such a being, therefore, being involved in absurdity and contradiction, the infallible laws imposed upon our nature necessitate the belief that such a being has no existence. Escaping from the Scylla of Pantheism our author is swallowed up in the Charybdis of Atheism. This is a conclusion he would repudiate with horror, but is there any alternative when once the infallibility of the truths revealed to us in our nature has been recognized and accepted? But further.

We have already seen that the nature of these intuitive truths as held by our author is such that "no objective revelation can possibly contradict them."

But it is a fact that the Scriptures do contradict them. The Bible declares that the soul is immortal. The testimony of the senses contradicts it. Consequently the Bible is to be rejected.

This testimony is not a mere negation. It is a positive assertion that the soul is mortal. We see two infants, male and female, slumbering on their mothers' breasts. They are two separate and distinct creatures, each a sentient, rational organism. There is no third existence in *esse*. The infants grow from childhood to maturer years. That which was not, begins to exist. The germ of a third existence begins to develop, and a child is born

into the world to be subject in turn to the law of reproduction and decay. The senses give us the child as a unit, as a single thing. It grows and develops its material organism and its sensible faculties till it arrives at the full vigor of manhood. The germ has become a flower, the flower has ripened into fruit, and the fruit begins to decay. The head begins to whiten, the hearing to fail, the eyes to grow dim, and the steps to totter. The mental faculties fall under the same law. The memory loses its power of retention, the will vasculates, and the intellect has forgot its cunning. Dissolution approaches. Where, now, is that indomitable will and that over-mastering intellect? Both lie in ruins. The physical organism has almost worn out, and the mental faculties have dimmed almost to darkness. Finally comes Death and physical and mental organism are both extinguished. Where, now, is will and memory and reason? Where is conscious existence? The senses affirm that the individual organism has ceased to exist. That which began has ceased to be—no more. The eye cannot see, the ear hear, or the lips speak. Consciousness will not respond to your touch, touch you ever so sharply. Sense repeats the natural law of decay and reproduction and the destruction of the individual.

Is not this argument against the immortality of the soul fully as conclusive as the argument employed by our author against the mystery of transubstantiation? Both contradict the testimony of the senses, and both, on his assumption, must be rejected.

Let us now consider those two sublime attributes of God which most nearly concern us as responsible creatures—His justice and His goodness.

1. *The conception of justice given in consciousness contradicts the character of God as given in the Bible.*

The Bible declares that God inflicts punishment upon the children for the sins of their fathers to the third and fourth generation. Under the Mosaic law children were put to death for the sins of their parents. God commanded Saul to smite Amalek and “to slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.” The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and He hardened the hearts of the Canaanites that they might come against Israel in battle and be destroyed. He created man and let him wander in darkness and ignorance, and selected only Abraham as the father of a race to whom He would reveal His will. To crown the whole, He sent his innocent Son into the world to bear the whole weight of the punishment due to guilty man. Will Dr. Hodge pretend, will any one pretend, for a moment to deny that the Bible contradicts our *a priori* notion of justice?

2. *The conception of goodness given in consciousness contradicts the character of God as given in the Bible.*

It will be sufficient in this connection to state that the Bible

affirms the existence of evil. This is fatally inconsistent with the conception of infinite Goodness given us in our moral constitution. That a Being of infinite Goodness should allow pain and suffering and death among creatures which He had made is impossible to moral consciousness. The existence of evil is shown both by revelation and experience, and in virtue of the alleged infallible authority of the primal truths we must reject not only revelation but a moral governor of the Universe, and be plunged once more in the abyss of Atheism.

Further, the *a priori* conception of the immutability of God destroys the doctrine of His providential dealings with man and renders prayer a nullity and an absurdity. The *a priori* conception of His foreknowledge is the conception of necessity. It destroys freedom both in God and man, makes moral government an impossibility, and declares the warnings, the invitations and promises of Scripture to be solemn mockeries.

It avails nothing, as before remarked, to assert that these are mysteries beyond the reach of human conception. Such an argument is not competent in the mouth of one who maintains that God has revealed certain infallible truths in the constitution of our nature. We have already seen what the nature of these truths must be. They are not relative for us, but truths which bind all possible intelligence. They are truths which arise out of the nature of God himself, are the objects of Divine cognition in the same sense that they are the objects of human cognition, and, as such, are absolute, immutable and eternal. Hence these truths must not be in conflict with each other, or with the character of God as given either in nature or in revelation. If they are in conflict in any one of these cases, and in a single instance, then we must either—

(a) Reject the authority of these truths, or—

(b) Reject the authority of the external revelation.

But our author holds, as we have seen, that revelation presupposes the existence of these truths; that they are the necessary conditions of the possibility of an external revelation. The consequence is inexorable. *Holding these truths our author must, logically, abandon objective revelation.*

This concludes the argument. It remains briefly to consider the proposition made in the outset, that *the assumption of these alleged first truths is a necessity of Protestantism.*

Protestantism professes to believe in a personal God, in the immortality of the soul, in moral responsibility, and in a future state of rewards and punishments. It further professes to believe that the Holy Scriptures are of Divine authority, and that a method of salvation for sinful man is therein revealed. The claims of the Church of God are rejected. There is no infallible teacher admitted to interpret what this method is. Each individual must dis-

cover this for himself at the peril of his eternal damnation if he should mistake. But admitting this objective revelation to be of Divine authority, it still remains to show how is this authority to be testified to us who were not witnesses of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. A supernatural revelation cannot rest upon human testimony. In that case faith would be merely human. The testimony must be the supernatural testimony of God himself. *This much Protestantism admits, and in rejecting the testimony of God through His Church, it sets up a direct and immediate infallible revelation of God to man in what are called "the intuitions of the reason" or "the original truths of consciousness."*

Else how could private judgment have anything to found upon in pursuing its investigation? What would be its tribunal in the last resort unless these ultimate truths are assumed? In the absence of these assumed truths there would be no foot-hold for its system, not even an apparent ground for its faith. Nor is it competent for Protestantism to reply that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the truth in each individual consciousness. For it is one of the essential doctrines of that system that the Holy Spirit only works in conjunction with the Word. Protestantism is compelled to assert, and does assert, that the testimony of the Spirit is only given when the external revelation is first intellectually apprehended in its true and proper meaning. The work of the Spirit is with the soul, not with the intellect. It merely illuminates. When the truth has been first rightly apprehended by the understanding, then the soul is opened to its appreciation. Thus the work of the Spirit is conditioned upon the proper exercise of the intellectual faculties. And it is the intellectual faculties which first determine—

(a) What is to be received as the word of God; and

(b) What is its import and meaning.

According to Protestantism, the Holy Spirit is not co-operative in this process. For if this were maintained, it would be to maintain that the Spirit teaches error, inasmuch as there is a vast diversity of opinion among Protestants as to what God has actually revealed. To avoid this consequence, Protestantism limits the action of the Spirit to that condition of the mind and soul where *the truth has been previously properly apprehended*. But of such critical moment is the work to be performed by the intellectual faculties in the attainment of the truth, that Protestantism dare not rest its claims upon the exercise of these faculties *as merely human*. A supernatural testimony must be at hand, and this supernatural testimony is found in the *"revelations made to us in our nature, which no objective revelation can possibly contradict."*

More than three hundred years have now elapsed since Luther undertook to establish a system of religious faith founded upon the doctrine of private judgment, in opposition to the authorita-

tive teachings of an infallible Church. In the meanwhile, Protestantism has been working out its inevitable results. In Northern Germany, the land of its birth, the few articles of belief which gave it color of title to be called a church have been repudiated; private judgment has logically developed into rationalism; Pantheism has usurped the place of the living God; and the boasted principles of civil and religious liberty find their expression to-day in imperialism and religious persecution. In England a woman is at the head of an establishment torn to pieces by an incurable schism, and the philosophy of Bacon and Locke has been succeeded in turn by that of Spencer and Darwin.

Our own country presents to our view a paradise of sectarianism. In the process of universal disintegration, division follows upon division, split succeeds split, one individual congregation after another sets up with a distinctive creed of its own to go to pieces again in turn, until every handful of fanatics who can rent a hall and pay an occasional speaker arrogate to themselves the claims of the Church of God!

Protestantism began with a protest against the authority of the Church and has ended with a protest against all religion. In vain do a few theologians like Dr. Hodge, still adhering to the older schools of so-called orthodoxy, make the effort to stem the rising tide of Atheism which is roaring around them. Their essential principles are too powerful to be successfully resisted in their natural consequences. The protestant press, protestant literature, protestant philosophy and protestant society is Atheistic to the core. True to its principles, its "progressive spirit" is still widening and extending the broad basis of its "liberality." This broad liberality is everywhere proclaimed. There are liberal views about religion, liberal views about marriage, liberal views about property, and liberal views about common honesty. All Divine sanctions are repudiated. All authority, except the authority of private opinion, is discarded as a relic of superstition and barbarism. There are no stable foundations for society or government. As private judgment is the rule of faith and practice in matters of religion, it is likewise the supreme arbiter in human laws. It gives Individualism in the State, and Spiritualism, Free-loveism and Beecherism in the conventicles. Protestantism stands as a half-way house between the Church of God and Atheism. Rationalistic in its principles, it yet shudders to draw the legitimate conclusions. It would save morality, save a personal God and save the immortality of the soul, while it denies the authority upon which alone these can be established. The logical thought of the age is forcing an exodus from the tottering edifice of the so-called orthodox Protestantism in two directions. The one direction is into the bosom of the Catholic Church, and the other is into the Atheism of what is known as modern science. In this

conflict between Faith and Atheism there can be but two parties: the Church on the one hand, and the sufficiency of human reason on the other. There is no middle ground. If the writer of this essay has contributed anything towards showing that no such middle ground exists, he will be satisfied.



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